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HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

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Wednesday, June 27 of 1934
U. S. Department of Agriculture

Subject: "Points About Jelly-Making." Information from Bureau of Home Economics,
U. S. Department of Agriculture.

--ooOoo--

We're going to have a School for Jelly-Makers today. I'll try to keep the answers short and snappy, for it's too hot to listen to long-drawn-out discussions this morning. So -- we begin:

Question: "What are the characteristics of an ideal fruit jelly?"

Answer: Bright color and delicate flavor, characteristic of the fruit from which it is made. When turned out onto a plate, the ideal fruit jelly holds its shape, but quivers when the plate is moved. It's tender, too; so tender that you can cut it easily with a spoon, yet the jelly breaks with a sharp cleavage line, and shows sharp surfaces.

Next question: "If you were just starting out on a jelly-making project, what equipment would you consider necessary?"

Even if I weren't just starting out, I'd check over my equipment. You might make a mental note of special items you need this summer, while I go over the list of equipment for jelly-making:

Pans for washing fruit, a brush for hard fruits, a colander, stainless steel paring knives, scales, a quart cup, a standard measuring cup, a large kettle for cooking fruit, long-handled spoons; and a jelly bag. We'll have to stop here a minute, to describe the jelly bag. Make it of canton flannel, with the nap side in, or of good quality cheesecloth. If you use cheesecloth, use two or three thicknesses. A sugar bag is all right, too.

I mentioned only half the things you need for jelly-making. You should have a support for the jelly bag, a large pan for sterilizing the jelly glasses, a tray for the jelly glasses, a saucepan for cooking jelly, a teaspoon, tongs for jars, paraffin, a small pan for melting paraffin, and labels.

Speaking of labels, I've seen some fancy ones in the department stores; especially nice to use if you're planning to give away some of your jelly at Christmas time. (Excuse me for bringing up the subject of Christmas, in the middle of the summer, but it's a comforting thought to know that you have checked a few gifts off your list.)

Our next question is about sealing and storing. When the jelly is firm, be sure that the inside rims of the glasses are free from drops of jelly. You won't get a good seal with paraffin unless the glass is clean and dry. Pour

melted paraffin over the top, and rotate each glass in your hand so that the hot paraffin will run up to the rim, and form a good seal. Cover the glass, label it with the name of the fruit and the date, and store in a cool dry place.

Next question: "How can I keep my jelly from fermenting?"

Answer: To prevent fermenting, protect your jelly from contamination before you seal the glasses, use new paraffin each year, and be sure the jelly glasses are sterilized.

Next: "Here's something I'd like to know. If I put up fruit juices this summer, and make them into jelly next winter, will the jelly have a good texture?"

Absolutely -- if it's made right. Jelly from stored fruit juice has just as good texture as jelly from fresh juice. There may be some loss in the color of red fruits, but probably no more loss in flavor than in stored jellies.

Here's a question that comes in every day or so: "What makes sugar crystals form in a jelly?"

Too much sugar, perhaps; or maybe you cook your jelly too long. Sometimes lack of sufficient acid in the fruit will cause crystals, or allowing jelly to stand too long before sealing.

Jelly made from cultivated grapes may have cream-of-tartar crystals. You can reduce their formation by allowing the juice to stand overnight, and then siphoning it off, or straining it. Other good jelly makers can grape juice, and allow it to stand for some time before making it into jelly. Still others combine grape juice with other fruit juices.

The next question is about jellies that "weep" -- jellies made from very acid fruits like currants. Get some small-size glasses for these jellies -- sizes small enough to be used at one meal.

Next: "How can I prevent mold on jelly?"

Answer: Molds may grow on jellies when the paraffin layer has become loosened, or on jellies which have oozed, or jellies stored in a hot damp place. If mold is growing on top of the paraffin, it is not likely to affect the jelly. But if it grows beneath the paraffin, the flavor of the jelly may be impaired.

Last question: "Will you please describe the jelly test for me?"

Certainly. For this test, dip a large spoon into the boiling sirup, and lift up the spoon so that the sirup runs off the side. As the sirup cooks down, it reaches a stage when it no longer runs off the spoon in a steady stream, but separates into two distinct lines of drops, which "sheet" together.

Let the hot sirup stand in the kettle while you lift the clean jelly glasses from the boiling water onto a tray. Then skim off the film from the hot jelly, and pour it into the hot drained glasses, carefully, so that it won't splash up, or drip onto the rim. Cover the glasses with clean cheesecloth, and let them stand until the jelly has set -- for twelve hours or longer.

Some time soon we'll have another jelly program, for there are more questions to answer.

